



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association
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February 28, 2012

Testimony in Opposition to:

Raised Bill No. 5291 AN ACT ICREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE, REMOVING THE MINIMUM WAGE TIP CREDIT, AND INCREASING PENALTIES FOR FAILURE TO PAY THE MINIMUM WAGE.

Submitted by: Henry N. Talmage, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, a statewide nonprofit membership organization of over 5,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and members of the Committee

On behalf of over 5,000 members of The Connecticut Farm Bureau I come before you today to raise our opposition to Raised Bill 5291 and specifically the provision to increase in the minimum wage.

Connecticut agriculture is a \$3.5 billion industry comprising over 20,000 jobs to the states economy according to a 2010 University of Connecticut study. I am proud to serve as Co-chair of the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development. There has been significant interest in local foods and farm products and the Council is focusing on the potential for growth in agriculture as a legitimate economic development strategy. As we move away from commodity production towards more value-added agricultural products our farmers are creating more jobs.

This legislation would increase the minimum wage by over 20% over two years. All farmers would be impacted but the largest segment of our agricultural community, the green industry would be especially hurt. Payroll is typically the largest single expense for our growers even exceeding heating costs. Many of our producers compete directly with growers from the other Northeast states and Canada and raising the minimum wage would put our producers at a competitive disadvantage. They cannot simply raise prices. In addition to production positions that provide young people and others a place to develop their career path agriculture also provides many other jobs in management, sales, distribution, trucking, equipment sales and service and other support services.. The agricultural economy is especially important to our rural communities that often do not have opportunities for employment from other segments of the economy.

We have what we hope is the beginning of a very fragile recovery to our economy. Agriculture can have an important part in that recovery and creation of many new jobs but we need to nurture that process. We simply cannot afford to increase the minimum wage and add barriers to job creation at this critical time.